



At presstime, U.S. soldiers and Afghan militia troops were jointly engaged in heavy fighting with a large group of suspected Taliban fighters near the village of Spin Boldak. Supported by Army attack helicopters and Air Force fixed-wing aircraft, the soldiers and their Afghan allies had so far killed some 18 enemy fighters and captured several others.

U.S. forces graduated a fifth battalion of approximately 400 Afghan National Army soldiers in January. The sixth battalion, trained by the French army, was scheduled to graduate in February. At press time, 1,750 Afghan soldiers had graduated from the ten-week basic training course. The overall goal is to create an army more than 700,000 strong.

The Army, Navy and Marine Corps in late January announced increases in the numbers of Reservists on active duty in support of the partial mobilization, while the Air Force announced a slight decrease. At press time, 64,741 Army National Guard and Army Reserve soldiers were on active duty in support of the mobilization. The number of reserve-component personnel from all services was 94,624, including both units and individual augmentees.

Thousands of American service members have deployed to the U.S. Central Command area of operations in anticipation of new missions in the region. The largest deployment is that of the Army's 16,500-man 3rd Infantry Division to Kuwait. The division's 2nd Brigade was already in Kuwait, and the 3rd Bde. flew to Southwest Asia in early January. The division's 1st Bde., aviation assets and other support elements were scheduled to deploy to the area later that month. The Navy, Air Force and Marines had also deployed additional personnel to the region, and more deployments were expected to follow, DOD officials said.

An Afghan boy gets a routine eye exam from an 82nd Abn. Div. soldier during an Army medical-assistance visit to the boy's village.

SGT Preston Cheeks

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A CH-47 Chinook lands on the outskirts of the village of Shin Kay, Afghanistan, to take aboard soldiers of the 82nd Airborne Division bound for another objective during Operation Panther Climax.





Soldiers of the 82nd Abn. provide security while other unit members search a compound for weapons and suspected Taliban members during Operation Panther Climax.



SSG Leopold Medina Jr.



SGT Preston Cheeks

Children and adults of Afghanistan's Mirogul village receive school supplies from 82nd Abn. soldiers during a humanitarian-aid mission.

CPT Issac Kim (left) and SPC Patrick Neal of the 82nd Abn. apply medicine to a rash on an Afghan girl's stomach during a medical-assistance visit to the child's village.



SGT Preston Cheeks

John Byerly



President George W. Bush visits with Fort Hood soldiers and family members during a recent trip to Texas. Addressing a crowd of more than 4,000, the president spoke about recent increases in military pay, improvements in housing and about the quality of training that Army personnel receive. Fort Hood troops — who are currently deployed around the world — were subsequently alerted for deployment to Kuwait as part of the buildup for possible war with Iraq.

Fort Benning, Ga.

Soldiers Train Civilian Journalists

THE 2nd Battalion, 58th Infantry Regiment, hosted nearly 60 civilian journalists from around the world participating in a crash course in combat survival.

Soldiers from various units and directorates led training, which included the proper ways to enter and exit a helicopter; first aid; land navigation; reacting to direct and indirect fire; mine awareness; and protection against nuclear, biological and chemical warfare.

"It's mainly to help them and whatever unit they might be embedded with," said SFC Patrick Clements, a 2nd Bn. drill sergeant who was among

18 soldiers selected to serve as escorts for the visiting media. "The idea is to give them as much of a taste of Army life as we can pack into a week," he added.

The journalists rose before dawn, did physical training, marched five miles, learned to

low- and high-crawl, experienced MREs and learned to apply camouflage.

More than 400 journalists have volunteered to participate in the training, which will prepare them to deploy with military units. — *Army News Service*

Bridgett Siter



Members of the national and international press practice exiting a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter during the media training at Fort Benning.

Washington

Promotion Points for Online Courses

SOLDIERS can now receive promotion points for credits they've earned through vendor-based learning courses. U.S. Total Army Personnel Command has announced that soldiers can receive one promotion point for every five hours of computer based training completed.

The Army currently offers more than 1,500 technical and business computer courses via e-learning, all of which are available to active-duty and reserve-component soldiers and to DA civilians, and the courses can be accessed by Internet.

To browse the SmartForce Catalog or to register for the

program, log into Army Knowledge Online at **www.us.army.mil**. Once online, select "Education" under the "Self Service" menu, then click on "CBT."

For more information on the promotion point system visit the PERSCOM homepage at **www.perscom.army.mil**. — *Computer Based Training, Contracting Officer Representative, Fort Belvoir, Va.*

Washington

Database Provides Global Tripwire

DOD personnel are on guard against possible bio-terrorism attacks. They are scanning computer databases featuring outpatient treatment information gathered from more than 300 military hospitals and medical clinics worldwide.

The Electronic Surveillance System for Early Notification of Community-based Epidemics, or ESSENCE, is helping DOD detect both naturally occurring outbreaks of disease and potential bio-terrorism attacks, said Army Dr. (COL) Patrick W. Kelley, an epidemiologist at Walter Reed Army Institute of Research.

To detect potential epidemics or bio-terror attacks, graphs of fresh medical data provided by ESSENCE are overlaid and examined alongside older data. If abnormal incidences of disease are observed, then an alert is provided to local public health officials, who investigate the situation and report back, Kelley said. — *ARNEWS*

Fort McPherson, Ga.

Reserve Safety Personnel Sought

U.S. ARMY Forces Command seeks reserve-component

soldiers to serve as safety officers and NCOs with its Army Safety Augmentation Detachment. Interested personnel should be captains, majors or sergeants first class.

Selected candidates will be required to attend FORSCOM's two-week Combat Safety Officers Course to learn the principles of risk management and concepts of integrating RM into Army operations.

The ASAD is at Fort McPherson and has approximately 98 Army Individual Mobilization Augmentees assigned. ASAD personnel serve as safety and risk-management officers augmenting headquarters safety staff.

For more information on the

ASAD program contact LTC Richard Cooper at (404) 464-7639 or visit the ASAD Web site at **www.forscom.army.mil/safety**. — *ASAD Public Affairs Office*

Washington

U.S. Brings Health Care to Afghans

THE United States has been "indispensable" in helping to restore health care in Afghanistan, said Dr. Abdullah Sherzai, director of planning at the Afghan Health Ministry in Kabul.

Sherzai, an American neurologist, gave up his research work at the National

Institutes of Health to go to Afghanistan.

In December, he accompanied Health Ministry officials to Washington to meet with U.S. leaders. In a Pentagon interview, Sherzai was the spokesman for Afghan Deputy Health Minister Ferozudin Feroz.

Expressing the minister's appreciation for America's help, Sherzai said the Afghan people hope the United States intends to create a long-term partnership with Afghanistan.

Sherzai said Afghanistan needs help rebuilding, equipping and supplying its medical facilities, and that health care is the first step toward security. "There's nothing more primary and immediate," he said.

"Without health, women aren't able to secure the household and, therefore, society is not secure. Without health, men are not able to work and the household situation falls apart, and, again, society is insecure."

The U.S. military has been particularly helpful so far, he said. U.S. medics are providing basic medical care; military veterinarians are treating farm animals; and Army engineer teams are directing repair and construction projects and digging hundreds of wells.

U.S. military officials are now seeking guidance from the Health Ministry on what they can do next.

Along with U.S. and coalition military forces, nongovernment organizations also have been an indispensable help, and American church groups and private U.S. citizens are doing what they can, Sherzai said.

People who want to help can communicate with the Afghan Health Ministry by writing to **neurondr@hotmail.com**. — *American Forces Press Service*



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PV2 Emily Daniai